

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L CANBERRA 5763

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MNUC, ENRG, TECH, AS
SUBJECT: US-AUSTRALIAN NUCLEAR SAFEGUARDS AGREEMENT

REF: CANBERRA 5624

1. SUMMARY. AUSTRALIA SIGNED ON JULY 20TH ITS FIRST NUCLEAR SAFEGUARDS AGREEMENT, WITH FINLAND. AT END OF NEXT WEEK, AUSTRALIA BEGINS INDIVIDUAL SAFEGUARDS NEGOTIATING ROUNDS WITH IRANIANS IN TEHRAN, FILIPINOS IN MANILA, KOREANS IN SEOUL, AND JAPANESE IN TOKYO. PREPARATORY TO THESE, AND BEFORE PARLIAMENT RECONVENES SECOND WEEK IN AUGUST, GOA IS VERY DESIROUS OF GETTING US-AUSTRALIAN INTERIM AGREEMENT SIGNED. END SUMMARY.

2. RY FERNANDEZ, HEAD OF GOA NUCLEAR TASK FORCE, SPENT AN HOUR WITH EMBOFF THIS AFTERNOON REVIEWING AUSTRALIA'S PROGRESS IN ACHIEVING NUCLEAR SAFEGUARDS AGREEMENT WITH FINLAND (JUST SIGNED), BRITAIN, FRANCE, IRAN, AND THE PHILIPPINES/KOREAN/JAPANESE TRIAD. THERE ARE NO SURPRISES FOR US IN ANY OF THESE. ON THE THREE CRITICAL ISSUES (REPROCESSING, RE-TRANSFER, AND "MFN-TYPE" WORDING), THE AUSTRALIANS HAVE HELD THE LINE. THEY ARE RESERVING THEIR POSITION ON RE-PROCESSING UNTIL THE OUTCOME OF INFCE; THERE WERE NO

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 CANBER 05763 210843Z

SUBSTANTIVE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE AUSTRALIAN AND US POSITIONS ON "RE-TRANSFERS" OR MFN-TYPE" WORDING.

3. GOA'S PRINCIPAL CONCERN AT THIS POINT IS THAT BOTH THE MEDIA AND OPPONENTS OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF AUSTRALIA'S URANIUM RESOURCES ARE ATTEMPTING TO DISCREDIT THE GOA BY INSINUATING THAT THE USG AND GOA DIFFER IN THEIR

COMMITMENTS TO STRONG SAFEGUARDS PROVISIONS; THAT AUSTRALIA'S SAFEGUARDS AGREEMENTS ARE NOT AS TOUGH AS THOSE OF THE US. THE FURTHER FEELING IS THAT WHEN PARLIAMENT RECONVENES ON AUGUST 15TH, POLITICAL MUD-SLINGING WILL RESUME AND THE GOA'S EFFORTS TO GET ON WITH DEVELOPMENT OF AUSTRALIA'S URANIUM RESOURCES WILL BE SET BACK.

4. IT WOULD BE MOST REPEAT MOST HELPFUL TO THE GOA'S EFFORTS TO HOLD THE LINE ON "SAFEGUARDS" AND COMMENCE DEVELOPMENT OF URANIUM RESOURCES IF THEY COULD SHOW THE PUBLIC THAT AUSTRALIA'S POSITION WAS SUFFICIENTLY ACCEPTABLE TO THE US THAT WE HAD REACHED AN INTERIM AGREEMENT BETWEEN US. SUCH WOULD ALSO BE TACTICALLY USEFUL TO THE GOA IN HOLDING THE LINE WITH THE FILIPINOS, KOREANS, IRANIANS, AND JAPANESE.

5. ACTION REQUESTED. TO BE OF OPTIMUM ASSISTANCE TO OUR POLICY OBJECTIVES RE AUSTRALIA'S SAFEGUARDS AND NUCLEAR DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM, IT WOULD BE MOST HELPFUL IF WE COULD BE IN A POSITION TO SIGN AN INTERIM US-AUSTRALIAN AGREEMENT BEFORE THE DEPARTURE OF THE AUSTRALIAN NEGOTIATING TEAM ON JULY 28TH. FERNANDEZ WILL HEAD THE TEAM, AND BOTH HE AND DEPUTY PM/MINISTER FOR NATURAL RESOURCES DOUG ANTHONY WILL CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 CANBER 05763 210843Z

BE TRAVELING TOGETHER UNTIL THE THIRD WEEK IN AUGUST. THUS, FOR PRACTICAL PURPOSES IF WE CAN'T SIGN THE INTERIM AGREEMENT BY JULY 28, IT WILL BE AT LEAST A MONTH BEFORE WE WILL AGAIN BE IN A POSITION TO DO SO. REQUEST ADVICE ON WHETHER DEPARTMENT BELIEVES INTERIM AGREEMENT MIGHT BE REACHED BY JULY 28TH. (FYI, IF IT WERE POSSIBLE, FERNANDEZ IS CONFIDENT PRIME MINISTER FRASER WOULD HIMSELF STEER THE INTERIM AGREEMENT THROUGH THE REQUISITE GOA INTERSTICES SO FONMIN PEACOCK COULD SIGN IT WITH AMBASSADOR HERE ON JULY 27.) ALSTON

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